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AUTHOR King, Nicelma J.
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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the findings of a national study of how desegregated school districts use staff development to prepare for desegregation. Data were collected in a series of field visits to sixteen desegregated school districts varying in size, ethnic composition, and geographic location. Three aspects of staff development were studied: the process, program characteristics, and local perceptions of the programs. For each of these aspects, brief descriptions of the study findings, conclusions, and policy implications are presented. (MK)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN DESEGREGATED SETTINGS— EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

NICELMA J. KING

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PREFACE

This report summarizes the findings of a national study of how desegregated school districts use staff development to prepare for desegregation. The research was sponsored by the National Institute of Education's Desegregation Studies Team under Contract 400-78-0068. The research was conducted by staff from Rand's Education and Human Resources Program, with Dr. Nicelma King as principal investigator. The rationale, findings, and methodology of the study are presented in greater detail in the final report of the project, *Staff Development Programs in Desegregated Settings*, R-2539-NIE, by Nicelma J. King with Maureen Carney and Cathleen Stasz.

The study had two broad objectives as agreed upon by the sponsor and the Rand team. They were:

1. To describe the process of staff development as an organizational response to school desegregation; and
2. To identify implications for future policy decisions that are raised by current staff development practice.

Specific research questions were derived from these broad research objectives. The data for the study were collected in a series of field visits to sixteen desegregated school districts varying widely in size, ethnic composition, and geographic location. The districts participated in the study voluntarily; their identity has been protected in the reports by the use of pseudonyms.

Other products of this research include case studies that describe the process and setting of staff development in each of the districts. These case studies have been published in three volumes: *Inservice Training in Desegregated School Districts: Eastern Region Case Studies* (N-1251-NIE); *Midwestern Region Case Studies* (N-1252-NIE); and *Western Region Case Studies* (N-1253-NIE). A literature review that synthesizes the literature pertinent to staff development in desegregated settings has also been published: *Inservice Education for Desegregation: A Review of the Literature* (N-1331-NIE).

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I. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the operation of staff development programs in desegregated school districts. School desegregation requires that school districts develop and implement desegregation plans as well as provide for any changes in the curriculum and operations of schools that will help them to provide desegregated education of good quality.

Teachers are often faced with the most demanding aspect of desegregation—providing an education to the new mix of students in each classroom. They may need additional help in communications skills, in using materials that reveal the achievements and cultural importance of a variety of racial or ethnic groups, or in ridding themselves of preconceptions and stereotypes regarding the abilities and limitations of these groups. Other staff members may need additional training to prepare for desegregation as well: Counselors, principals, support staff, administrators, and school board members may have special problems that result from the increased demands of school desegregation. For example, counselors may need additional training to help them assess student potential by using placement tools other than standardized tests. A wide range of placement tools is desirable in any school district; the use of standardized tests alone may result in resegregated classrooms in the desegregated district.

School districts typically provide this additional assistance to their staff members through inservice or staff development programs, which are intended to help staff members to respond positively to the challenge of desegregation. Unfortunately, there are no commonly accepted guidelines for school decisionmakers on how to develop these programs; no cohesive body of theory or literature on which programs are most appropriate to particular desegregation problems; and no strategy by which federal officials can determine which programs are most deserving of funds. As a result, there is a great deal of confusion about what staff development programs are intended to do in the desegregated setting, and how they achieve—or fail to achieve—those intentions.

To remedy some of this confusion, this study addresses three aspects of staff development in the desegregated setting, described below under the heading "Research Issues."

RESEARCH ISSUES

Staff development refers to the ongoing training that school districts provide to employees. This training is also referred to as *inservice*, which distinguishes it from *preservice*, or training received prior to employment. Though recent articles on educational practice have described staff development and inservice as if they were distinct, there is little agreement among policymakers, researchers, or educa-

tors on operational distinctions. In this report, the two terms are used synonymously.

The study addresses the sponsor's broad research objectives by considering three aspects of staff development:

1. The *process* of staff development in the districts visited;
2. The *program characteristics* of staff development activities;
3. Local *perceptions* of the staff development programs.

The *process* of staff development is the sum of the activities in the district environment that influence the policymaking, planning, and delivery of inservice programs. Information on *process* is important to policymakers at all levels because administrators need to know if they have control over particular decisions that affect the funding or implementation of staff development activities. The *program characteristics* are the specific descriptions of staff development activities, such as their subject matter, format, duration, and funding sources. Policymakers are interested in learning about program characteristics because there has been limited information on the particulars of staff development programs, and policymakers at the district level are not usually aware of what other programs may be focusing on or what funding sources are available. *Perceptions* of staff development programs are people's assessments of the activities in which they have been involved. In general, these perceptions fall into two areas: assessments of program effectiveness and identification of areas where further staff development is needed. This information is helpful to policymakers because they want to know if the programs are having the desired effects and whether more programs are needed in particular subject areas.

STUDY DESIGN

The report is based on data collected in 16 school districts during the spring of 1979. The districts were selected according to five criteria. The districts had to:

- Be desegregated;
- Have a staff development program;
- Be varied in their stage of desegregation;
- Be of varied ethnic composition; and
- Be varied in size and in their geographic location.

The sample was selected from 216 districts suggested by 94 desegregation experts. The final sample of 16 contained 8 districts with "older" desegregation (between 1970 and 1974), and 8 districts with "recent" desegregation (between 1975 and 1978). Four of the districts were over 50 percent minority, 5 had significant proportions of more than one minority group, and one district had Hispanic students as the largest minority group. Four districts enrolled over 30,000 students, 6 enrolled between 15,000 and 30,000, and 6 had fewer than 15,000. The districts were located in all regions of the country, except the South and Southwest.¹

¹Because the sponsor of this research was already funding a study with somewhat similar objectives in the South and Southwest, it was requested that we exclude those areas from our sampling pool.

A semistructured interview technique was employed to obtain needed information from respondents. Within each district, these included district administrators, trainers, principals, teachers, counselors, school board members, community members, and teachers' union representatives.

Two strategies were used to report and analyze data collected in the school districts. First, the interview teams wrote case studies that summarized the information obtained in each school district. These 16 case studies have been published as Rand Notes.² Second, information from each interview was summarized on standardized interview codesheets after the interview took place. Separate codesheets were used for the various categories of respondents: administrators, trainers, principals, school staff, community and school board members. Information from the case studies and coded interview guides provided the data for the findings and conclusions reported in Sec. II below.

²*Inservice Training in Desegregated School Districts: Eastern Region Case Studies (N-1251-NIE); Midwest Region Case Studies (N-1252-NIE); and Western Region Case Studies (N-1253-NIE).*

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The key elements of this exploratory study addressed three aspects of staff development that previous studies in desegregated school districts have not examined: the *process* of staff development; the *program characteristics* of inservice courses; and the *perceptions* of those programs or courses. This section summarizes the most important findings of the study for each of these aspects, and specifies the policy implications of those findings.

THE PROCESS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The examination of the staff development *process* in desegregated settings identified the *activities* that are part of the process and the *actors* in those activities. The activities that influence staff development begin prior to staff development itself, when the districts determine their desegregation goals and formulate their desegregation plans.

Desegregation goals were usually set by the school board with the assistance of district administrators. The goals of districts that desegregated voluntarily—that is, without an external mandate—typically emphasized improvements in educational quality. These goals appeared to set a positive tone for staff development programs, and staff members in these districts had a positive view of staff development as helping “good” things to happen. Districts that desegregated as the result of court orders or other external mandates were primarily interested in peaceful compliance with the law, a “minimum effort” goal that set a less positive tone for staff development. Staff members in these districts saw staff development as necessary to prevent “bad” things from happening, rather than as a helping device for positive changes.

The desegregation plan was usually formulated by district administrators, with input from other actors, and was ratified by the school board. The type of plan implemented also influenced staff development programs. Where plans used “magnet” programs or entailed extensive curricular change, staff members often indicated a need for prolonged inservice training prior to desegregation to help them design the new instructional program, and to adapt changes into their teaching repertoire. Staff members in districts that used more traditional approaches to school desegregation, without many curricular changes, indicated a lesser need for prior staff development because such changes require less preparation.

The staff development process includes identification of staff development needs, planning and delivery of programs, and evaluating program outcomes. Administrators were the most influential in determining which needs would be met through staff development, although teachers, principals, and trainers were usually involved in needs identification to some extent. Needs identification was a well-defined, formal activity in 6 of the 16 districts, but more haphazard in the other 10. In districts where formal needs assessment had taken place, the respondents

identified fewer needs for program improvement. Formal needs identification is important because it seems to provide a channel for school staff to give district decisionmakers feedback on the changing nature of staff development needs for future programs.

Trainers were always involved in planning the programs, often with the assistance of administrators and principals. Program planning was a distinct activity in 5 of the 6 districts that had formal needs identification, and occurred in only 1 of the 10 districts without formal needs identification. When planning was not a distinct activity, respondents often charged that the programs seemed haphazardly planned, with no clear purpose, audience, or structure. Staff development programs were directed primarily to teachers and counselors, although principals, community members, and school board members often attended. District administrators were rarely recipients of training. Programs were sometimes evaluated, but evaluation of staff development activities was consistently done in only 2 of the districts. When evaluation occurred, it was usually done by trainers.

This description of the staff development process and its actors leads to the following conclusions and policy implications:

Conclusions

- Needs identification appears to be an important aspect of the staff development process and a keystone of a total organizational effort to provide systematic planning and evaluation. Nonetheless, many districts do not conduct formal needs identification, nor do they have any systematic means of planning or evaluating their programs.
- Voluntary desegregation seems to provide the most positive climate for staff development activity.
- Despite the push for teachers and teacher organizations to become more involved in professional growth activities, administrators are still the primary decisionmakers for those activities.

Policy Implications

- Federal program administrators who wish to change program guidelines in a way that will improve the quality of staff development should consider the value of a formal needs assessment to document the demand for a particular staff development program for which assistance is being sought. This is not to say that formal needs assessment alone can make staff development effective, but it appears to lend direction and impetus to inservice programs.
- Districts should develop systematic procedures to provide formal needs assessment, planning, and evaluation of staff development programs.
- Federal agencies should continue to fund school districts for staff development prior to implementation of the desegregation plan, particularly when magnet or voluntary elements seem likely to be a part of the acceptable plan.

- Districts should develop staff development programs with special emphasis on the inservice needs of principals and administrators, even though the majority of staff development continues to focus on teachers. Principals in particular need staff development to address their special concerns and responsibilities in the desegregated school.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The *characteristics* of staff development programs include their duration, subject matter, and funding. The programs were usually short, with 55 percent lasting one day or less. Staff development was most often concentrated in five subject matter areas: Human Relations, Curriculum, Multicultural Education, Conflict Management/Discipline, and Community Participation. Fully 95 percent of the programs encountered used at least one of these components. Desegregation-specific (DS) programs, i.e., those developed in response to actual or anticipated needs arising from desegregation, used Human Relations, Multicultural, and Conflict Management/Discipline components more often than did non-desegregation-specific (NDS) programs. Staff development programs received funding from the school district more frequently than from any single external source. DS programs were somewhat more likely to be funded by an external source than NDS programs. It appears that funds from Title IV of the Civil Rights Act and ESAA, the two largest sources of federal desegregation assistance, are being directed to DS programs rather than NDS programs.

A content analysis of the subject matter components of the staff development programs revealed that Human Relations, Conflict/Discipline, and Community Participation are considered more value-laden than curriculum or cognitive components. Although district personnel believe these are important, they are difficult to "teach" in a course because there are no accepted norms for "good" human relations, conflict management, or community relations. The ordinary standard is a mere absence of problems, not a set of behaviors that can be accepted by professionals and easily taught. In contrast, curriculum and skills programs are viewed as neutral subjects, and are more easily taught because they present an identified body of concrete knowledge. As a result, subjects like Human Relations, Conflict/Discipline, and Community Participation are often combined with Curriculum, Multicultural Education, or other components that provide "hard" information. This combination appears to reduce the anxiety sometimes associated with teaching highly value-laden subjects by providing more value-neutral information, but it also diffuses the subject matter considerably.

District characteristics are only weakly related to program characteristics. One district characteristic, stage of desegregation, is related to subject matter and funding of programs. Districts that desegregated after 1975 are currently offering more DS training than districts that desegregated earlier. It appears that DS training tends to be concentrated around the time of a desegregation plan's implementation.

This description of the program characteristics of staff development leads to the following conclusions and policy implications:

Conclusion.

- Staff development in desegregated settings combines value-laden subjects with more informational subjects.
- Districts seem committed to staff development, as indicated by their willingness to spend their own funds for the programs.
- DS staff development is more likely than NDS to be funded by federal programs.
- Staff development funded by Title IV and ESAA, the two major sources of federal funding to assist desegregation, is directed predominantly to DS programs.
- DS staff development is more likely to occur in recently desegregated districts than in older desegregated districts. This differentiation probably reflects both the reduced need of "older" districts for emergency DS staff development and the difficulty "older" districts have in obtaining external funds for DS staff development.

Policy Implications

- Staff development planners at the school district level should find alternative methods of "packaging" staff development on DS topics to prevent them from being so diffused that recipients do not get any information of value, particularly in the short-duration programs. Although it is true that DS subjects tend to be more interrelated and value-laden than other subjects, it is not always an advantage to combine all the topics into a single, one-shot program.
- Federal agencies that provide support for DS programs should encourage the development of demonstration programs that provide different approaches to human relations training programs. These approaches should not attempt to negate the value-laden nature of the subjects, but to approach the value content of the programs in a more straightforward way.

PERCEPTIONS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

This study elicited respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of staff development programs in desegregated settings, and their opinions on what new programs were needed and how existing programs needed improvement.

Teachers, principals, district administrators, and trainers agreed that staff development is effective (about 3.5 on a 5-point scale), and that it had a greater effect on staff morale, staff competence, and intergroup relations than on student attitudes and achievement. The results showed no differences among school districts that could be attributed to district size, stage of desegregation, racial composition, their use of various elements of the staff development process, or program characteristics.

Respondents identified a variety of needs for program improvement. Somewhat surprisingly, improved trainer quality was mentioned the least often. Respon-

dents in districts with no formal process for needs identification tended to perceive more needs for program improvement, notably for more followup and more planning. Given that formal needs assessment occurred in districts with more consistent planning activities, this suggests that needs assessment and planning increase the perceived quality of subsequent staff development programs. Programs with Curriculum and Basic Skills/Cognitive components were associated with fewer needs for improvement. Districts that desegregated prior to 1975 had fewer needs for program improvements overall, but when respondents from these districts did identify needs for improvement, they usually indicated a need for more money to expand the programs. When this response is coupled with the higher percentage of programs in these districts that are funded by the school districts, it suggests that older desegregated districts may have difficulty in funding an adequate staff development program.

Needs for further staff development were usually in the same area as past staff development. Different actors in the school districts saw staff development needs differently. One area of agreement was that every respondent category saw Human Relations as a top priority—for someone else. For example, school board members saw a need for specialized training for principals, while district administrators saw a need for more Conflict/Discipline programs.

In most cases, the needed content of future staff development resembled that of current programs. More extensive training in Human Relations, Conflict/Discipline, and Community Participation appeared to be required for continuing support of existing programs. Needs for Curriculum programs indicated that new programs needed to be initiated. Program planners cannot accurately identify needs for further staff development without a careful needs identification.

Staff development was believed to make a positive contribution to school desegregation by preventing certain desegregation problems from occurring, while it also provided support for school staff. There are no objective measures of these outcomes, but it is important to note that school people believe it would not be possible to desegregate successfully without staff development. Although respondents did not directly relate staff development programs to student outcomes, they were unanimous in the belief that staff development has a direct effect on teacher morale, teacher competence, and intergroup relations. It may be logical to conclude that staff development must be provided to support teachers so that they can continue to help students in the desegregated setting.

This description of the perceived outcomes of staff development leads to the following conclusions and policy implications:

Conclusions

- School district personnel regard staff development as effective, and it appears to make a positive contribution to school desegregation by improving staff feelings of competence and positive intergroup relations. It was also believed to act as a crisis-prevention mechanism in some school districts.
- Staff development programs have a greater effect in staff-centered changes, such as increases in teacher morale, competence, and intergroup

relations. Student-centered changes, such as improved achievement or attitudes, appear less likely to be directly affected.

- Staff development programs offered in districts with a formal needs identification, planning, and evaluation process appear to operate more smoothly and to result in fewer needs for improvement.

Policy Implications

- Policymakers at all levels should develop a clearer sense of the scope and depth of the staff development activities they are funding, and what they expect the programs to accomplish. Staff development is clearly not a panacea for all of the problems in the desegregated school district, but it provides staff members with opportunities to develop techniques and solutions for responding to those problems.
- Federal agencies should continue to fund staff development for the improvement of desegregation. Attention should be paid to providing some support for DS programs in school districts that desegregated prior to 1975. The nature of DS problems in those districts may no longer require emergency assistance, but shifts in student populations and staffing patterns may from time to time necessitate additional staff development to maintain desegregation.

CONCLUSION

This research is an exploratory look at an area that policymakers and educators have long taken for granted. Although the scope of the study was limited to only 16 school districts and to the elementary and middle school levels, it provides important views of staff development that may be generalizable to a wider circle of districts. The report also provides a base of information and issues that should be addressed in future research.

The report is largely descriptive because description is a necessary first step in understanding what staff development is, how it operates in the desegregated context, and perhaps most important, how it could be changed to improve its effectiveness in the desegregated setting. The report has not answered these questions completely, but it has identified several salient issues that policymakers at all levels can consider when they make decisions about staff development. Too often, it appears that programs are chosen and launched impulsively because they seem like a "good idea," without identifying the needs of the proposed recipients of training, deciding whether staff development can meet those needs, and systematically considering program substance.

Because even such minimally planned programs often receive the enthusiastic support of staff members, however, the research team has concluded that staff development can be a valuable tool in the desegregated setting. The study also suggests that staff development effectiveness can be increased by more attention to goals and objectives, the needs identification that precedes the programs, and program content and delivery.